

UPSTAIRS BULLETIN

Vol. 19 - No. 5

April 30, 1981

Chicago, IL

An Educational Group

"Wherever we are, it is but a stage on the way to somewhere else, and whatever we do, however we do it, it is only a preparation to do something else that shall be different."

--Robert Louis Stevenson.

In these years of radical changes -- or as Henri Bergson might term it -- "creative evolution", we become more aware of these changes that happen daily in our lives and pass unnoticed.

Walking west on Madison Street from State Street in 1950 -- we first passed that grand old department store, "The Fair" which had the greatest dry goods department that ever existed under one roof. It was my favorite shopping place for costume material and many of those costumes made from that material are still in use. Materials today like everything else is made only to last a short time. In the next block was the 40-story Hotel - "The Morrison" which went down and was replaced by the First National Bank with its slanting upwards curve. Across the street was the famous "Hardings Restaurant" - a favorite meeting place for after the theatre. We ate there often with Lucia Chase, Kriza, Kaye, Goldner and other Ballet Theatre friends. Or, Byron Kaye, Eddie Noll, the Bernard Brothers and other night spot friends. There were easily a dozen smaller shops in that block with a News Reel Theatre. Now, this block is occupied by the elaborate Three First National Bank Building.

Around the corner in that block was the "Old Planters Hotel" and the "Clark Street Theatre". In the next block on the north side of the street was the original spot of the old "LaSalle Theatre" which was later "Kid Howard's Gym" and now was the sight of the St. Peters Cathedral. A few doors to the west was the "Brevoort Hotel", later changed into a modern office building. On the corner of LaSalle and Madison was the beautiful and gracious "LaSalle Hotel", now replaced with a factory type building with absolutely no charm or beauty. Along side of it, to the west, was a ground level parking lot which has

grown into a millionaire's corner property. This is directly across the street from our windows.

In construction at this point, on the northwest corner, will be the Madison Plaza, another giant which will block out all sunshine on our little building, should we have chosen to remain. At Wacker Drive and Madison is another highrise going up and the City garage across from the Opera is being demolished for yet another building.

All these changes have not changed 185 West Madison, to which our school moved in 1950, with its mosaic floors and high ceilings, bordered with plastic frieze. History has it that many years ago the building had a sub basement which housed a Chinese laundry and when we came into the building, Wilt's Luggage store occupied the street level store and basement. Much has tried to change our little building. . . . In the great winter of '78 a huge falling icicle pierced our roof, with disastrous results. On three other occasions, cars from the parking lot across the street have crashed into the first floor of our building with frightful damage to the restaurant below. But this did not change "185" as far as we were concerned. What did change us? I guess it was Father Time's toll on the human body -- and let's face it -- it was not meant to last forever. We are not indestructable, even if our building seems to be. However, we are told that its days are numbered also.

I now repeat the quotation used in the last Bulletin - which, by the way, I had to explain to many people. A quote, I now realize, only an artist seems to understand.

"One has to spoil a picture a little bit in order to finish it."

- Eugene Delacroix.

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FIVE TRIPS TO PHOENIX

We had been instrumental in encouraging Kelly Brown to leave New York and settle into a life of teaching in Phoenix, Arizona. Our concern for his welfare had always been personal and guarded. On August 8th, 1966 we made our first visit to see how he was progressing with the school and naturally to spend time with his growing and charming family. This time, we stayed at the beautiful Mountain Shadows Hotel, outside of the city, in an oasis landscaped with Oleander, Pampas Grass and Bougainvillea and many other interesting flowering trees and shrubs.

This visit was a happy one getting acquainted with the children. Leslie and Elizabeth were anxious to display their progress in ballet - both with slim, reed-like bodies and coltish legs. Ethan was a small charmer very fond and attached to his older brother - Kevin, our God-child. Kevin was a handsome, lean youth, silent as could be without entering in on any conversation. Kelly was as proud as punch of them all and Isabel had always been an attentive and concerned mother. She began to find that Phoenix had much to say in its favor. We left feeling that Kelly had at last found his place in life and would do well in this thriving community.

Three years later, on December 27, 1969, we made our second visit to the Brown's. This time we stayed at the Olivos Hotel, closer to Kelly's studio and home. On this trip we noticed that Isabel kept the children apart with her mother - Sonia - "so the adults could talk". We began to feel a tension that was unexplainable. Once Kelly had a drink he became headstrong and irrational, (not at all like the Kelly we knew in our school). The evening became unpleasant and we asked to be driven back to our Hotel - feigning fatigue from our trip. The next morning, we watched Kelly teach a class and were appalled that he smoked (he had always been asthmatic) throughout the class. Also, he was brought by one of the students a glass of clear fluid - which appeared to be water - we found out later that it was gin. When I questioned him later about the smoking and drinking, he argued that it was essential to him or he could not teach. No argument or reasoning would phase him the least.

The next day, he and his family drove us to the beautiful Sonora Desert Museum, outside of Tucson. Here he was his old charming and loveable self we had always know him to be. The out of doors made him a different person. In this affable mood, Stone

took the opportunity to dare Kelly to give up smoking along with himself. Stone did stop - Kelly did not.

The New Year's evening, with a house full of company, arguments were all at low ebb amongst his friends - of which he had a great many. But, we left Phoenix the next morning full of doubts and worry about their future.

August 2, 1970, on our way to the Grand Canyon and the Southwestern Parks, we both taught a class for Kelly in his studio and enjoyed his eager and well trained students. We found very much the atmosphere we had in our own Chicago school. On this trip our time was divided between the Browns and our friends, Helen and Al Wagner -- Helen had been a pupil in our Oak Park days in Chicago. Our stay was short so outside of our classes, we did not have much time together privately. We were so impressed with Leslie and Elizabeth's improvement, that we offered them summer scholarships if they could come to Chicago. Both girls did come for the summers of '71 and '72. They lived at the Three Arts Club.

On Father's Day, June 20, 1971, we had our last phone call from Kelly. It had always been his custom for many years to remember us with his love and cheerful greetings on this day. He made a great point of his great respect and appreciation - which we never for a moment doubted. But that was our last call from him and his charming letters also ceased to appear.

In 1974, we made a final effort to see what we could do to help Kelly with his problems and we found him extremely uncommunicative - morose and austere. We had just come from a very pleasant stay at Bright Angle Lodge at the Grand Canyon and wanted to spend New Year's eve with the Browns. It was on this trip that we met Sam and Maggie Slaff, who had been most kind to Kelly in many ways (Sam ended up making all the funeral arrangements). At this time Kelly had just spent 9 months with AAA and seemed proud of what he had accomplished. However, it was not to last very long.

New Years Eve was a pleasant, if a very confusing one. What a family! Leslie, definately on her way at 16 - Elizabeth, envious and wishing she too were off - Ethan, still a very small child -and Kevin, strange, beautiful, silent as all hell, dying for some sort of attention - if not love - then just sharing of interest. Kelly never speaking civilly to Isabel during the entire evening. Whether they

remain together or not would take an immense amount of fortitude from Isabel. Everything changes from moment to moment and all this time, dear sweet Sonia sits in the background - patient, loving and trying hard to understand everyone.

The fifth trip to Phoenix was to speak one of the Eulogies (there were four) at the Memorial service for Kelly. Two weeks before he had had a heart attack while teaching a class and had remained in a deep coma for sometime. A second attack while in the coma brought the end. His death was a jolt to all the students of our school who were his classmates and even to the younger ones, who had heard about him and admired the many pictures of him in our studio.

Speaking at his Memorial Service, as his first ballet teacher, I felt that mainly I was speaking to his young students who were present. That as a teacher, I thought there was a lesson to be learned from any of life's happenings. In Kelly's case, who was loaned at birth a beautiful physical instrument, I emphasized "loan" because it is something one is given to start life with and should be treated with love and respect and not wasted by abuses. He was to be pitied because of his family curse, but it did not excuse him from the abuse of his physical "loan". Many wise, young people are becoming non-smokers and temperate drinkers, where their parents are not. I hoped further, that these pupils of his present would continue to glory in their healthy bodies and profit by the excellent dance training he had given them.

Kevin followed as the last to speak and his was a masterpiece. Where he had always been the silent one, he was now a man with a load of human emotions which he expressed magnificently. He also ended with a tirade against the abuse of smoking and drinking.

Back in July of 1956, I wrote of Kelly in my Journal as follows -- "The most amazing thing about Kelly is that he was born in the south and is completely incapable of prejudice - he is gentle - amiable - loveable - he does have a deep and passionate nature, which in his short lifetime has already gotten him into trouble. A wonderful honesty in admitting his error beguils even the wronged one - and what's more, he immediately does something to correct the wrong - and typical Libra in his well proportioned body - handsome and cleancut."

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PICTURES

I have always been "fixed" on pictures and have always had too many on my walls at home and at the studio. From now until the end of the Summer Course the studio walls have as many pictures as the dressing room walls will hold. This collection represents five generations of dance in Chicago -- all from our area. If you are not in the studio, do come in and just browse over them. They represent a lot of work on our parts and a great deal of love for their work by the students. Dance is such a fleeting art -- it can only live in the minds of those who have seen and enjoyed it. We are open to suggestions as to what to do with this collection of pictures and will welcome ideas. What important use can be made of them? Letters pour in daily from everywhere regretting the end of an "Institution of Dance". If the records are examined carefully, it can be said to be an important part of Chicago's dance history. Who, may I ask is interested in Chicago Dance History? Apparently, the Chicago Public Library is not. Then who is? Should the Chicago Historical Society be? Again, we are open to suggestions.

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